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This is a program guide for foreign student advisors and administrators in universities. Foreign students new to the United States should have both initial orientation and long-term continuous orientation. Suggestions for an orientation program are given. A program needs both planning and organization into general, non-academic, and academic categories. A chart is presented designed primarily for the foreign student advisor who has little or no experience with programs of initial orientation. Within the academic and non-academic categories, the chart attempts to diagram a variety of combinations and suggestions. The aim is to provide information about the campus environment and the student's role. Many variations are possible within this framework. Suggestions are also given for financing an orientation program. It is the primary responsibility of the foreign student advisor and others involved in the designing of the program to present the plan to the administrators for their review, and secure total support before the program's implementation. The relevancy of the timing and the ordering of the topics to the students' readiness to learn and adjust are the basic criteria of the program. (Author/EK)

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Guidelines

INITIAL ORIENTATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

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INITIAL ORIENTATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

Ideally, a program of initial orientation for foreign students would begin in their home countries, with instruction covering both the generalities and the specifics to be anticipated in their educational experience in the United States. Unfortunately, pre-departure orientation of any kind is rarely available, and in many cases does not cover the unique aspects of a local situation. It is, therefore, desirable that every institution accepting and enrolling foreign students, regardless of the number, make some provision for their initial orientation. The program does not have to be elaborate or costly. Each institution will work out its own pattern, based on resources and time available. It is assumed that certain limitations are involved, and suggestions and program designs are made in light of these limitations.

WHY ORIENTATION?

There are two kinds of orientation which the newly arrived foreign student, *at whatever level of academic achievement*, should have — initial orientation and long-term, continuous orientation.* Within the first category, opportunity should be provided, just prior to the opening of the registration period and the formal beginning of the academic year, for both academic and non-academic orientation, so that the individual foreign student may be prepared to function effectively, comfortably, and with reasonable initial success in his new environment. *From the moment that the institution accepts a foreign student, it assumes this responsibility.* More and more institutions, in fact, are making orientation mandatory. *It is strongly urged that this policy be adopted by all institutions, as both a sound educational principle and a valid psychological concept.*

Although orientation begins with the information** which the institution sends to the foreign student before he leaves home, he seldom arrives with enough understanding of American culture, values, and institutions to make an easy transition to American academic life. *His whole academic program may be endangered* if he is not helped to establish this fundamental relationship to his new environment. All that he can be expected to contribute to this adjustment is his own willingness and readiness to learn. This alone requires great effort on his part.

THE FOREIGN STUDENT AS A PERSONALITY

There is no prototype of *the* foreign student. Students from any one country differ at least as widely among themselves as U. S. students do. There are also great differences among nationals of various countries. Foreign students as a group will display various degrees of cultural understanding and sensitivity, which will be reflected in their ability to adjust to the new academic situation. But it is important to recognize that any foreign student has his own culturally conditioned conceptions and expectations which influence his learning. He will need to test and adjust these in order to arrive at

* The latter type of orientation will be treated in a separate section of Guidelines entitled, "The Interpretation of the United States to Foreign Students."

**This subject will be treated in a separate section of Guidelines entitled "Selection and Admission of Foreign Students."

new interpretations. Equally important to remember is that, however different he may seem, the foreign student will share with all serious students the common real goals of academic or technical competence that imply some degree of self-knowledge, pride, and determination. The foreign student has a great deal of potential to develop and contribute. The university has an obligation to create the atmosphere in which the uniqueness of this potential can be made to work *for* him, rather than against him.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL RELATIVITY

Anyone wishing to initiate or strengthen a program of initial orientation for foreign students can make use of the concept of cultural relativity in its most simplified form. Basically, this amounts to the recognition on the part of the Foreign Student Adviser, and others responsible for the program, that they must:

(1) *respect* the foreign student's sensitivity about and pride in his own culture, and;

(2) *help* him to develop the ability to function comfortably and effectively in the host culture.

In short, cultural relativity describes the truth that "attitudes" are subjective and must be handled with care and understanding. To be both "respectful" and "helpful" without seeming condescending and superior requires a good deal of flexibility and sensitivity in working with foreign students.

The first problem to be resolved, then, by those who design the orientation program is how to achieve such a balance. The difficult decision in any program is what to put in and what to leave out in the limited time available. In making this decision, the concept of cultural relativity suggests that an introduction to the American Way or Philosophy of Life might prove more difficult and less acceptable to the foreign student than would concrete facts and specific information on the immediate local situation, which are not as likely to arouse his feelings of nationalism or challenge his sense of self-identification and individuality. This is especially true if the program of orientation is brief.

A second factor that will have great influence on the design of any institution's orientation program is the level of English language ability of the group. Obviously the intricacies of cultural relativity will not be understood if the mechanics of language expression and understanding have not first been mastered, or are at least at a level sufficient to permit the foreign student to comprehend both the purpose and the general content of the orientation program.

The program and suggestions outlined in the following pages intentionally omit a broadly based cultural orientation and assume that the group of foreign students has an adequate level of language comprehension and expression. However, provision is made in the suggested program for a period of English language testing.

THE FIRST STEP: PLANNING

A good program of "Initial Orientation" for foreign students will be based upon a realistic assessment of the institution's possibilities and limita-

tions, and of its foreign students' needs and their limitations. It will then proceed to correlate them as best it can.

It is generally agreed, however, that the objectives of an initial orientation program for foreign students should include:

1. Immediate local campus and community orientation.
2. Adequate academic orientation to permit the foreign student to carry out his responsibilities and compete successfully with American students.
3. Incidental factual information and practical guidance.

The actual planning of the program, to implement these objectives, should reflect the following self-administered questions:

1. How much time and money are available?
2. What kind of staff help is needed?—secretarial, student assistance, English laboratory technicians, faculty, etc.
3. What resource persons are needed and available? — registrars, housing officers, representatives of Immigration and Naturalization Service, etc.
4. What is the make-up of the foreign student group?—How many? Graduate or undergraduate? What ages? Single or married students? What distribution of backgrounds, fields of study, interests, goals? What levels of language ability or deficiency in understanding are involved?

The ability to plan ahead requires that the Foreign Student Adviser have close contact with and good cooperation from those involved in the admission of foreign students at the institution, so that he may gather as much information as possible about the new students prior to their arrival. This is especially important if the Foreign Student Adviser has no part in the admission process.

THE SECOND STEP: ORGANIZING

In order to make the organization of the program more efficient, the suggestions given here are divided into "general," "non-academic," and "academic" categories:

General Suggestions:

1. Obtain top level administrative support for a special orientation program for foreign students which will reflect *their* needs and identify with *their* point of view. Use regular freshman orientation for U. S. students as a supplement, if and where appropriate or necessary.
2. Centralize *the planning and the supervision* of the program. Involve other administrators and personnel as appropriate and useful to the smooth functioning of the program.
3. Upon receipt of the names of the incoming foreign students, send a letter to them, indicating that all new foreign students are *required*

to be on campus by a certain time, as "noon, September 15th," so that they can be met, housed, and ready to begin the orientation program; also indicate *why* this program is being planned for them.

4. Use all relevant resources of the institution and the community (especially for extra-curricular activities) in *the implementation* of the program. Involve as many of the administration, the faculty, American and experienced foreign students, and community volunteers as are willing to contribute to and as are needed for a "team approach" in the program. Create a cooperative and working atmosphere.

5. For the sessions themselves, orient the speakers on approach, content, timing, and pace of speaking. No more than two speakers during any one session, and no more than thirty minutes as maximum time allowed to each speaker. No meal-time speakers. Stress the need for speaking slowly, distinctly, clearly, and without allusions that only Americans would understand.

6. Avoid very long sessions. Always allow for at least a fifteen minute to half-hour break, especially in longer sessions.

7. Allow leisure time. Indicate what parts of the program are *optional* (and what that means), and what periods are actually *free time*. Avoid over-programming.

8. Print or mimeograph as much of the information as possible, (including all major rules, requirements, regulations, maps and guides, office locations and hours, etc.). See that it is distributed. Discuss and illustrate the written materials in the orientation sessions. Use a uniform format, so that it can be kept easily and referred to later.

9. Use visual aids wherever applicable (e.g., registration explanation).

10. At frequent intervals during the orientation program, inquire of the group whether what is being communicated is also being understood. Allow time for repetition of key points or information. If possible, prepare a digest of the orientation information, especially for the use of late arrivals. Invite and encourage questions from the students.

Suggestions for "Non-Academic" Orientation:

1. In planning extra-curricular activities, involve American or experienced foreign students as assistants, guides, hosts, etc., and be sure to select them carefully and orient them as to their duties, responsibilities, and information-giving roles.

2. Stress the contribution of the foreign students themselves not only to the classroom, but also to the campus, the institution, and the local community, as part of the mutuality of international educational exchange.

3. Explain to the foreign students the role of the Foreign Student Adviser, his office, and its services.

4. Try to set aside some time for a brief, informal discussion of "culture

shock" as a typical and universal reaction experienced by most people living abroad.

5. Keep discussion groups small.
6. In working with the campus dietitian to plan meals, include rice as a basic and universally acceptable staple.

Suggestions for "Academic" Orientation:

1. Aim at communicating the basic academic expectations and standards that constitute and characterize the American educational system, and the methods of achieving them.
2. Attempt to orient the group to those fields of study and courses which are most in line with their respective interests and goals.
3. Turn to appropriate faculty members or academic advisers as discussion leaders or resource persons.
4. Create a "working" atmosphere; stress the "time-saving" aspect of academic orientation.

THE CHART

The chart that follows is designed primarily for the use of the Foreign Student Adviser who may have had little or no previous experience with programs of "Initial Orientation." Both kinds of "Initial Orientation" — academic and non-academic — are included. Within these two categories, the chart attempts to diagram a variety of possible combinations and suggestions. It aims at providing specific factual information to the foreign student both on the immediate campus environment and on his role as a student, with emphasis on the academic. It also includes some limited orientation to the United States as the host culture.

The suggestions made are equally applicable to a large university setting or a small liberal arts college, private or public, four year or two year. The charted program would most conveniently accommodate between 25 and 100 foreign students. It requires a minimum period of five days to cover the suggested topics. If less time is available, some of the sessions could be shortened and combined to reduce the total time and size of the program. For a larger number of foreign students, the basic ingredients of the program are the same, but the sessions would require some adjustments. Or, if the number of foreign students to be serviced is very small, much of the "formality" of structured sessions could be dropped, and casual, informal talks, perhaps held in the home of the Foreign Student Adviser, could be substituted, to accomplish essentially the same effect. *How* orientation is done is not nearly so important as *that* it be done.

The sessions may be re-ordered, combined, or eliminated in any manner that best suits the individual institution's needs and situation. Many variations are possible within the general framework given here.

A PROGRAM OF INITIAL ORIENTATION (ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC) FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS.

	Morning Sessions	Afternoon Sessions	Evening Sessions
FIRST DAY **General Sessions; Immediate Campus Orientation**	**General Welcome to U. S. and Campus.** Self-introduction of FSA and his role; institution's role in international educational exchange. Distribute following, in written form: 1. Orientation schedule. 2. English testing schedule.* 3. Health examination schedule.* 4. Statement on institution's academic standards and expectations. 5. Facts on the institution (location, history, etc.) 6. Map of & guide to campus. (location of major offices, facilities, hours, services). 7. Immigration & Government regulations details. *(Rest of morning—schedule one-half of group for English test, other half for physical).	Afternoon reserved for continuation of English language tests, physicals, and any other required placement examinations.	**Get-Acquainted Informal Social Evening.** FSA reports on group composition—number of foreign students, backgrounds, fields, etc. Enlist student aid to role-play a mock registration run-through. Encourage academic advisers, admissions persons, housing officers, etc., to attend. Announce next afternoon's required tour of the campus.
SECOND DAY **Orientation to the Academic Community of the Campus**	**The Educational System on This Campus.** Cover: 1. Explanation of the university or college, departments, fields of study represented. 2. General degrees offered. 3. Major-minor system. 4. Course requirements and distribution. 5. Minimum academic standing. 6. Grade point average. 7. Number and range of faculty. Suggestion—this discussion could be organized on a departmental basis.	**Required Tour of the Campus,** including: 1. Student Union. 2. Infirmary and health services (insurance). 3. Major administrative offices. 4. Chapel. 5. Recreation facilities. 6. Location of classrooms. 7. Museums. 8. Laboratories. 9. Typical department. 10. Main library.* *Indicate further orientation to library and its use.	**Free Evening.** "Suggest" ways to spend evening, and have student hosts, especially fellow nationals, available to assist, as needed.
THIRD DAY **Academic Orientation**	**Classroom Techniques** 1. Purpose of lecture. 2. Art of taking notes. 3. How to outline. 4. Purpose and use of quizzes, tests, and examinations. 5. Difference between essay and multiple choice tests. If time, hold brief trial lecture and ask students to participate; follow by trial short quiz on lecture material at end of period.	**Out-of-Class Techniques** 1. How to study and read by skimming. 2. Research projects, themes, and the art of writing a paper. 3. Techniques of research.* *Hold discussion in the library, with verbal description and actual demonstration of its use, including card catalogues, Dewey decimal system, book borrowing. Conduct trial run.	**Faculty-Student Relationships** (informal discussion) 1. Student participation in class. 2. Evaluation of performance. 3. The grading system. 4. Degree and course requirements. 5. Program changes and dropping of courses. 6. Expectation of academic honesty.

	Morning Sessions	Afternoon Sessions	Evening Sessions
FOURTH DAY **Extra-Curricular and Community Orientation**	**The Campus as a Community** Introduction to and brief explanation of non-academic aspects and activities of the university or college: 1. Social organizations. 2. International groups. 3. Sports & athletics. 4. Theater, art, music. 5. Other cultural events. 6. Annual campus events. (Homecoming, dances, celebrations, special weekends, traditions).	**The Community Near the Campus** Tour of community, if nearby. 1. Shops, stores (where to buy books), supermarkets. 2. Churches. 3. Services (laundry and dry cleaning, repairs). 4. Banks (explain banking, checking accounts). Description of nearest city. 1. Location and information on public transportation and rules on travel. 2. History and background. 3. Major attractions and characteristics. 4. Notable facilities.	**Social Patterns and Customs** Information on: 1. Dating patterns. 2. Invitations (giving and accepting). 3. Holidays. 4. Conduct on campus and in the community. 5. Formality & informality in American society. 6. Social regulations and restrictions of the university or college.
FIFTH DAY **General Non-Academic Orientation**	**Living in This Part of America** Discussion of: 1. Climate, clothing needs (bargain shopping). 2. Nutrition and foods. 3. Health protection and insurance. 4. Personal hygiene. 5. Handling of finances; how to budget. 6. Vacation opportunities; host family possibilities (if such exist). 7. Resources and opportunities of the immediate area.	**The Pace of American Life** Discussion of: * 1. Role of mechanization; time-saving tools and devices in U.S. society. 2. Use of leisure time. 3. Contribution of the automobile and its disadvantages (costs, insurance, etc.). 4. Role and contribution of volunteer activities to American society. 5. Democracy as an experiment in cooperative effort. *See detailed suggestion below.	**Free or Recreational Period** Recommendations: * 1. Picnic outing. 2. Theater, concert, movie. 3. Swim or soccer game. 4. Informal reception by FSA in his home. *Afternoon and evening sessions could be switched, if weather is a factor.
SIXTH & SEVENTH DAYS	*If* a weekend is involved during a period of initial orientation, this would be an excellent time for home visits, dinners, or stays, if such are available in the local community.		

*A SUGGESTION FOR NON-ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

Rather than attempting to orient a group of foreign students to "major issues and problems" of American culture and life, the Foreign Student Adviser might make much better use of the very limited time available by considering another approach. A greater integration of topics chosen and resources at hand might be achieved if an institution selected its orientation topics on the basis of their *local or regional applicability.*

For example, someone responsible for initiating an orientation program at a land-grant college or university in Arizona would have ample resources to demonstrate the topic, "The Effect of the Frontiers on American Expansion." The natural reservoir of "wide-open spaces" and their current development into rapidly expanding new communities are ideally suited to conveying to the foreign student a sense of both the historical and modern impact of expansion and growth on the *local* character of the college and the community.

In other words, because the foreign student is on a given campus only for a limited time, his orientation ought to be scaled to that which he can see, feel, and experience firsthand, locally. This would seem infinitely preferable to intellectual abstractions on subjects which, without direct contact or experience, are at best inapplicable to him personally and at worst misunderstood or misconstrued. Moreover, he will carry this information with him upon his return to his home country. Better that he know in depth and consequently have reliable knowledge of some *given* aspect of American life than pass along vague information on "The American Way of Life" without benefit of any concrete examples of or experience with it.

PROGRAMS OF INITIAL ORIENTATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

In some instances, the Foreign Student Adviser may find himself called upon to design a program of initial orientation for a group of foreign graduate students. As a group, these students will tend to be older and will reflect both greater academic and social maturity and experience. While this situation *does not eliminate the need for general non-academic or cultural orientation* of graduate students, it is likely that a greater emphasis on the academic standards, expectations, and procedures *at the graduate level* will be more useful and effective in preparing the graduate foreign student for his responsibilities than would a general, broadly based program of initial orientation.

It is therefore recommended that, under these circumstances, the Foreign Student Adviser consider the following as suggestions for the organization of the program:

1. Hold a general session for the entire group on the institution's academic commitment, standards, and expectations, and its involvement in international educational exchange. Include discussion of the academic organization of the university—departments, degrees granted, number and range of faculty, etc.

2. Use the "Field of Study" approach and divide the group by departmental affiliations.

3. Have each department chairman or representative (possibly experienced graduate students, foreign or American), within the department setting, discuss and explain the organization of the department, facilities (labs, libraries, research projects) available. Clear indication should be given of degree requirements, course distribution, thesis or dissertation expectations, foreign language (other than English) requirements for Ph.D. degree, and minimum point averages acceptable.

4. Hold general or departmental sessions on both in-class and out-of-class techniques, including the use of lectures, the seminar, art of taking notes, outlining, skimming, research and the art of writing papers or seminar reports, quizzes, tests, examinations.
5. *Require a tour of the campus, with special emphasis on the library and its use,* in connection with the role of independent research and writing on the graduate level.

The exclusive use of the academic and "Field of Study" approach in initial orientation is more appropriate for and valuable to graduate foreign students because it assumes that a certain amount of general orientation has already been, or can independently be, absorbed by the student. It is likely to move faster and present a greater impact.

FINANCING AN ORIENTATION PROGRAM

To the question, "How do you finance the program?" no one solution is possible. Various colleges and universities approach it in different ways, depending upon the support and importance that the institution's administration accords the program, as well as the institution's ability to realize its commitment financially. The important point here is that the program *can be done economically* through volunteer administrative, faculty, student, and community involvement and participation. Such a "*team approach,*" under conditions of cooperation and mutual support, can be resourceful and imaginative in finding economy measures.

For example, in metropolitan areas where several institutions of higher learning are clustered, it may be both economical and effective to combine their programs of non-academic orientation into a single program, administered by the community organization where one exists or could be created. The academic orientation could be reserved for the individual institution to reflect the particular characterstics of the local campus and the special academic needs of its foreign student enrollment.

In smaller communities, much of the costs of non-academic orientation, in terms of maintenance of the foreign students, might be voluntarily absorbed by interested members of the community, acting as "host families."

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

Enclosed in the carrying pocket of this section's divider are illustrative materials on Orientation Programs for Foreign Students, gathered from colleges and universities experienced in this field.

A FINAL REMINDER

The effectiveness of any program of Initial Orientation for Foreign Students rests upon, (1) the development of a specific and concrete plan for the program by those responsible for services to foreign students, and (2) upon the total support of that program by the top level of the institution's administration. *It is, therefore, the primary responsibility of the Foreign Student Adviser and others involved in the designing of the program to present the plan to these administrators for their review and to secure their total support of it prior to implementation.*

Within the actual operation of the program, the various facets (facts, ideas, experiences) should be brought out at the time when they are most likely to be relevant to the needs of the foreign student. *The relevancy of the timing and the ordering of the topics to the student's readiness to learn and adjust are the basic criteria of the program.*

Above all, the foreign student should emerge with the impression that his studies are primary, and that a congenial and sympathetic environment directly support the academic purpose of his experience in American education.

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*This bibliography represents selected readings from among the numerous publications and materials available on this topic.

**(planned).

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